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6 October 1986

NOTE FOR: All NIOs
NIC/AG

FROM: C/NIC
VC/NIC

SUBJECT: Standardization of Terms of Reference

1. We need to further standardize the drafting of Terms of Reference (TOR), particularly to reflect recent emphases in thinking that have been raised by the DCI and others and that we have discussed at staff meetings over the last several months. Future TOR's should therefore follow the following outline:

a. Indicate who asked for the Estimate, for what purpose and what the rough timeframe is for preparation.

b. Critique the last Estimate on the same or related topic. This should be about 1-2 pages in length, representing a thoughtful and non-defensive view of the community's last effort on the subject. How accurate was it? How has it diverged from actual subsequent events? Any lessons to be learned? Did we overestimate or underestimate the problem? Did we miss the main issue?. If footnotes were taken or alternative judgments were made, who seems right in retrospect?

c. State the problem or issue that will be dealt with in the Estimate -- along lines that our previous Concept Papers have taken. This paragraph outlines the issue and its relevancy to policy problems.

d. Key Questions. These should usually be no more than 5 and can be less. They represent the heart of the Estimate. The Key Judgments are answers to the Key Questions. Draft Estimates will be checked against the Key Questions. The questions should be as broadly conceived as possible.

e. The outline of the paper. The main sections of the outline should spring from the Key Questions. Sub-topics should be posed as sub-questions -- which are preferable to simply statements of sub-topics. The reader should be able to look at the outline and get a sense of the range of issues that will be touched upon under each major question.

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f. The TOR should state which other NIOs have been and will be regularly involved in the conceptualization of the paper from the very outset.

g. Before the TOR is drafted it should be discussed with VC/NIC and/or C/NIC, along with other pertinent NIOs, to insure that we are on the same wavelength and that broad papers are appropriately relevant and meaningful to the work of other NIOs in related areas. Some NIOs will fairly regularly be involved as participants: NIO/ECON, possibly NIO/USSR, NIO/GPF, or others as appropriate.

h. An in-house attachment to the TOR should mention, at least generally, what outside consultants may be used in helping formulate the paper. These consultants may be paid or unpaid, cleared or uncleared, formal or informal. The most effective use of external consultants comes before the drafting of the TOR and certainly before coordination. There are many uncleared experts who are willing to offer their thoughts on how they see a given country or problem and who need never see any Agency paperwork. They can help focus the NIOs thinking on how to formulate the problems and consider various outcomes.

i. The paper should list the key policy level players whom the NIO expects to consult to insure that the paper touches on issues important to them. This does not mean the Estimate should only answer their questions. The NIO himself determines the full range of the issue -- but this range must include specific policy questions. It pays to clarify these policy questions with the policymaker before drafting the paper or even the TOR.

j. All Estimates should generically include the following:

-- The broader regional/functional context of the variables and judgments focused upon in the paper.

-- The major variables that affect the Key Judgments, the effects of those variables, and what kind of alternative outcomes they could produce along a spectrum of probability.

-- Elaboration on the range of alternative scenarios, i.e., most likely case, and alternative cases, to include plausible best and worst cases, for example.

-- A brief statement of indicators which would help the reader to track any subsequent drift toward better or worst, or more or less likely scenarios along the spectrum.

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2. This format should serve to insure that we are in fact doing those things for which we have been asked to consider regularly by the DCI, the DDCI, the SRP, MAP, and SSCI, as well as reflecting our own internal discussions on ways of improving our own product.

3. Front loading is everything. If we haven't done it right before the TOR is coordinated, subsequent mouth-to-mouth resuscitation by the NIO doesn't really salvage a dying Estimate.

BGen Frank B. Horton III

Graham E. Fuller

cc: DCI
DDCI
SRP

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